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Administration portrayal of Nicaragua inaccurate, women say

SEATTLE

Two women armed with a video cassette say their recent trip to Nicaragua opened their eyes about the leftist Sandinista government and the Central American nation's image as portrayed by the Reagan administration.

The video cassette is a complete recording of the news conference held by the Nicaraguan government earlier this month announcing the expulsion of three top U.S. diplomats, a move that set off a serious diplomatic reprisal by the United States.

The women believe the tape is the first copy of the complete charges against the American officials to reach the country, at least through unofficial channels.

Shown on Nicaraguan television, the news conference contained allegations of a CIA plot to poison Nicaragua's foreign minister, Miguel D'Escoto, a Roman Catholic priest. U.S. officials have heatedly denied the charges.

Frances Romero, who left Seattle for Nicaragua with her retiring husband, Marco, nine months ago, said she was shocked at what she learned there. The extent of her past political involvement was volunteer campaign work for former Washington state Gov. Dan Evans, a Republican.

Mrs. Romero returned to Seattle this week with another woman, Gretchen Sleicher, and both said the alleged CIA plot indicated President Reagan has not been truthful in his descriptions of what's been going on in Nicaragua.

On the tape, a young Nicaraguan woman named Marlene Moncada contends she was recruited by CIA agents while working as a Nicaraguan consular official in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Ms. Moncada claims she again was approached by CIA officials after she was transferred to Managua, where she was asked to provide personal and political information on D'Escoto.

But she said the agents didn't know that she already had told the Nicaraguan government of her being recruited and much of the CIA's subsequent actions involving her were recorded on film.

Ms. Moncada said she was asked by a CIA official she identified as "Baby Johnson" to give a bottle of poisoned Benedictine liqueur to D'Escoto. "I said, 'Me, eliminate a priest? Never!'" the woman said during the news conference.

She eventually agreed to take part in the alleged plot, but instead turned the bottle over to the government, which tested it and found it to contain thallium, a metallic element.

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